

RACE AND POLITICS

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THE disastrous twisting of anthropological ideas for political ends which is doing so much harm to scientific repute in some countries has called forth a welcome protest from three British authors in an eminently readable work,* endeavouring "to bring together the chief scientific facts now available on the subject of 'race' in man—in other words, the genetic differences between human groups—and to present them in the light of established scientific principles." They remark that "often a nation is a society united by a common error as to its origin and a common aversion to its neighbours"!

Perhaps it were better to say aversion to its neighbours and its minorities, and here the sadistic treatment of the Jewish minority in Germany is the worst case in point. It is also astonishingly ill-advised, as the rulers of the country had an unparalleled opportunity for making their position and prestige secure had they made their treatment of minorities an example that might have given them grounds for claiming good treatment for German minorities in other lands. Such wisdom would also have strengthened their plea for a share of the responsibilities that the white man carries in relation to intertropical lands.

The authors' statement about European peoples attempts to be fair, and fully realizes that we are all of rather mixed ancestry; indeed, it carries the discussion of the problems involved as far as is possible in a small book designed for the general reader. While there is no very serious difficulty in discriminating between the more typical representatives of the major groups of mankind, whether we call them species, sub-species or races, this does not imply that there is no difficulty about a reasonable definition of

the major groups. Dr. Haddon has often suggested that hair is a better basis of classification than the common one of colour. It is probably wisest to use hair character (kinky, wavy, lank) as the basis of classification of main groups, after setting aside certain groups that appear to include survivors of early drifts of mankind, which retain characteristics of great interest from an evolutionary standpoint.

When we come to the smaller groups within the three large ones there are difficulties. Men have moved and mixed again and again. What is the result? Some say that mixture is so intimate as to give racial homogeneity of an old-established population without marriage-barriers. If so, then a graph of the variations of each of the most conspicuous characters—head form, stature, nose form, colouring and so on—is as much as we could hope to get. In following this method we should be describing peoples in terms of an average that would usually be an average for a political area or national group. We could easily drift in this way into an idea of physical diversities between nations which would be exaggerated.

The outstanding fact of direct observation is that in each nation we find tall and short, dark and fair, long heads and broad heads, and, in spite of centuries of intermarriage, they show little if any tendency to settle down to an average. Bundles of physical characters are apparently very frequently handed down through the generations and our so-called racial names such as, in Europe, Nordic, Alpine, Mediterranean and others, are convenient designations of such bundles of characters, most of them with a long history behind them, though we should be careful not to assume too lightly that there ever was a group that was entirely and purely Nordic or Alpine or Mediterranean. In studying a population we should therefore try to see how physical characters are

* Huxley, Julian, Haddon, A. C., and Carr-Saunders, A. M. *We Europeans*. London, 1935. Jonathan Cape. Pp. 299. Price 8s. 6d.

bundled together in different persons, at the same time fully realizing that even a person with a very large bundle of, let us say, Nordic or Mediterranean characters may have had in his ancestry people who showed Alpine and other traits. This means that we are dealing with something different from the contrasts between the typical representatives of the three great groups, the wavy-, kinky- and lank-haired peoples of the world, in which cases long descent can be traced without intermixture outside the great group.

It is the Nordic bundle of characters that has been most called into discussions of a political character. When we are dealing with a tall, long-legged, spare-built, blue-eyed, fair-haired, narrow-nosed, long-faced man with regular features and a cranial index under about 77·5 (or a cephalic index under 78·5) we are on firm ground, and there are indications that the upper limit of value of the cephalic index might be raised a little. We can, however, only with some difficulty make an effective line between this bundle and another that the Swedes call East Baltic, in which the index is higher, the nose is different, the face less regular and, perhaps, the colouring less blonde and the stature lower.

The Nordic bundle of characters is most characteristically handed down in the Swedish and Norwegian populations, where it is so prevalent as to set the tone. Any attempt, and all such attempts are hazardous, to draw conclusions about mental and moral features associated with particular characters should therefore take most serious note of features noticeable among Norwegians and Swedes, both in their homelands and in lands to which they may emigrate.

That these populations show valuable mental and moral qualities will be widely admitted. How far they are to be considered as inherently associated with certain physical characters, and how far they express results of environmental influences, remains to be seen; we are far from being able to make a statement here.

It is at any rate clear that sadism is not a character any observer would associate with those populations, neither is that

mental fatigue which makes men relapse into acceptance of authoritarian decisions more often than is inevitable.

Outside Sweden and Norway there are sprinklings of the Nordic bundle in various European lands, a good deal in the British Isles, a relatively moderate amount in Germany, where the cephalic index is so generally too high and the face so generally suggests either the Alpine or the so-called East Baltic or some other bundle. France, Hungary, Poland and Russia and so on all show examples of this bundle of characters too, and it could no doubt be traced farther still. The fancy that cephalic index is modified by various habits of nursing may be dismissed as unsupported by evidence; artificial deformations are practised in certain lands, but the means taken are much more severe.

Of the contributions to the social life and intellectual achievements of the various peoples which have been made by persons carrying the Nordic bundle of physical characters little that is profitable can be said. Pictures and photographs of past and present leaders in British and German life at any rate bring out the great contributions of other elements. In the case of Germany neither Luther nor Kant nor Bismarck was Nordic; none of the trio, Hitler, Goebbels, Goering, now in power, can be put into that class, and that class seems not to have contributed to the intellectuality which was such a feature of Germany until recently in the same proportion as did the varied Jewish elements.

What is such a strange feature of so many of those who idealize the Nordic type is that they diverge more and more from the methods so characteristic of Swedish and Norwegian dealings, and seem to copy the ideas that have found favour in post-revolutionary Russia. The ravings of Houston Stewart Chamberlain have brought a sad harvest.

A special note of appreciation of the chapter on "Europe Overseas" by Professor Carr-Saunders must be added. It deals with many problems affecting emigration policies, and draws attention to the large non-Nordic element that went to the original building up of the United States of America.